

# Infringements: Commission refers Italy to Court over its failure to adequately prevent further spread of the quarantine harmful organism 'Xylella fastidiosa' in Apulia

Today, the European Commission decided to refer **Italy** to the Court of Justice of the EU on the grounds that the Italian authorities are not taking the necessary measures to eradicate the quarantine harmful organism *Xylella fastidiosa* in Apulia and thus have failed to stop its spread.

Following the first notification of the outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the Apulia region in October 2013, the Italian authorities failed to fully comply with the EU rules on quarantine organisms harmful to plants or plant products and prevent its further spread in Apulia ([Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2015/789](#) and [Council Directive 2000/29/EC](#)). These measures involve, among other provisions, the removal of infected plants in some parts of the demarcated areas immediately after the first confirmation of the presence of *Xylella fastidiosa*, as well as monitoring and sampling of the plants in the relevant parts of the demarcated area. The timetable communicated by Italy was considered not effective to ensure the immediate removal of the infected trees as requested by EU legislation. This lack of adequate action increases the high risk of further spreading of the organism out of the current demarcated area.

## **Background**

*Xylella fastidiosa* is one of the most dangerous plant bacteria worldwide, causing a variety of diseases, leading invariably to the death of infected plants, with huge economic impact for agriculture. Member States have to take all necessary measures to eradicate *Xylella fastidiosa* and, when this is not possible, at least prevent its further spread within the rest of Italy and elsewhere in the EU territory.

The Commission has repeatedly urged Italy to fulfil its obligations. A letter and a supplementary letter of formal notice were sent in December 2015 and in [July 2016](#), followed by a reasoned opinion in [July 2017](#).

The Commission continues to use all available means to pursue the ongoing dialogue with the Italian authorities with the aim to prevent further spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Apulia.

## **For more information**

-The EU's actions to fight [Xylella fastidiosa](#)

-On the key decisions of the May 2018 infringements package, please refer to the full [MEMO/18/3446](#).

-On the general infringements procedure, see [MEMO/12/12](#).

-On the [EU infringements procedure](#).

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## [New vans sold in Europe in 2017: large decrease in annual average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions](#)



Image © Ryan Searle

The average van registered in the EU in 2017 [emitted 156.0 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometre](#) (g CO<sub>2</sub>/km), which is 7.7 grams less than in 2016. This reduction brings the EU average emissions 10.9% below the 2017 target of 175 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km. This target was already met in [2013](#). Further efficiency improvements of 6% are still needed to reach the EU's more stringent target of 147 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km set for 2020.

### Key findings

- In 2017, almost 1.6 million new vans were registered in the EU as in 2016. Higher sales in Sweden (+48%), Czech Republic (+26%) and Slovenia (+20%) were balanced by lower sales in Croatia (-27%), Hungary (-16%), Ireland (-13%), Poland (-12%) and United Kingdom (-10%).
- Two out of three new vans (64%) registered in the EU were sold in just four Member States: the United Kingdom (20%), France (19%), Germany (15%) and Italy (10%).
- The average fuel-efficiency of new vans varied widely across Member States due to the different models and sizes of vehicles sold in each country. As last year, average emissions were lowest in Portugal (133.2 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km), Cyprus (133.4 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km) and Bulgaria (134.9 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km) and highest in the Czech Republic (173.6 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km), Slovakia (170.1 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km) and Germany (169.2 g CO<sub>2</sub>/km).
- The average weight of new vans sold in 2017 also varied across countries. Smaller vehicles were sold in Malta, Cyprus and Portugal (< 1 570 kg); larger vehicles (>1 950 kg) in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Finland.
- There is now an increasing number of electric and plug-in hybrid van models available on the EU market. Registrations of such vehicles increased by 32% in 2017, compared with previous year, representing 0.8%

of the total EU van sales. However, this is significantly lower than electric and plug-in hybrid passenger cars' 1.5 % share of total car sales in the same year.

- Diesel vehicles continue to make up the vast majority of the new van fleet, constituting 96% of sales.



## Background

The EEA collects and regularly publish data on new light commercial vehicles registered in Europe, in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 510/2011. The data reported by all Member States in order to evaluate the efficiency of the new vehicle fleet includes information on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and vehicle weight.

It has not yet been confirmed whether different manufacturers have met their own specific annual target for 2017, based on the average weight of the vans they sold. The EEA will publish the final data and the European Commission will confirm manufacturers' individual performances in the autumn.

## Testing vehicle emissions

Member States report new vehicles' CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels, measured under standardised laboratory conditions, following the requirements of the New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) test procedure. This procedure is designed to allow a comparison of emissions for different manufacturers. However, in recent years it has been widely recognised that the NEDC test procedure, developed in the 1970s, is out-dated and does not necessarily represent real-world driving conditions and emissions due inter alia to a number of flexibilities that have allowed vehicle manufacturers to optimise the conditions under which their vehicles are tested.

The EEA has published a [non-technical guide](#) explaining the key reasons for the differences observed between official and real world driving emissions. The 'Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure' (WLTP) has been introduced since September 2017 to decrease the divergence between laboratory test and real world emissions.

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## [Sofia declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit, 17 May 2018](#)

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## [Remarks by President Donald Tusk ahead of the EU-Western Balkans summit and the Leaders' agenda dinner](#)

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We are ahead of a summit during which EU leaders will discuss innovation, European future for Western Balkans, and the response to President Trump's policies on trade and Iran.

Starting with our dinner tonight, we will have a debate on innovation and the digital economy. Europe is lagging behind other major economies in terms of innovation. Innovation is set to impact our lives at an ever-growing pace over the coming years, raising not only hopes but also ethical questions. Europe needs to play an active part in this transformation, as it will be the reality of all Europeans. That is why tonight, I will ask EU leaders two questions: *What do they want to do at the EU level to boost breakthrough innovation? And: How do they want the EU become a major player in big data?*

Following last week's announcement of the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, we need a united European front. I want leaders to reconfirm that the EU sticks to the deal as long as Iran does. The deal is good for European and global security, which is why we must maintain it. Despite the US hesitation. We will also look at options for the EU to protect European companies from negative consequences of the US decision. And I want the European Commission to be given a green light, so

that it is ready to act whenever European interests are affected. We should also seek ways, together with other partners, to address very real concerns over Iran's ballistic missile programme and its regional activities.

Trade is another topic for tonight's discussion. We will decide on the best way forward in EU-US trade relations. Here again, unity is our greatest strength. And my objective is simple: we stick to our guns. This means a permanent exemption from US tariffs on aluminium and steel if we are to discuss possible trade liberalisation with the US. The EU and US are friends and partners, therefore US tariffs cannot be justified on the basis of national security. It is absurd to even think that the EU could be a threat to the US. We need to bring back reality in this discussion, which is not the case today.

Tomorrow, we will meet our Western Balkan partners collectively for the first time in fifteen years. It will be an opportunity for both sides to reaffirm that the European perspective remains the Western Balkans' geostrategic choice. Beyond the longer-term outlook, we want to demonstrate that we care about socio-economic development in the region here and now. Investing in infrastructural and human connections with and within the Western Balkans is in the EU's best interest. And it will be the objective of our summit. I hope to bring our Western Balkan friends closer to the EU.

Everything we are going to discuss today and tomorrow, has a global dimension. I have no doubt that in the new global game, Europe will either be one of the major players, or a pawn. This is the only real alternative. In order to be the subject and not the object of global politics, Europe must be united economically, politically and also militarily like never before. To put it simply: either we are together, or we will not be at all.

Besides traditional political challenges such as the rise of China, or the aggressive stance of Russia, we are witnessing today a new phenomenon: the capricious assertiveness of the American administration. Looking at the latest decisions of President Trump someone could even think: with friends like that who needs enemies. But frankly speaking, Europe should be grateful to President Trump. Because thanks to him we have got rid of all illusions. He has made us realise that if you need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of your arm. Europe must do everything in its power to protect, in spite of today's mood, the transatlantic bond. But at the same time we must be prepared for those scenarios, where we will have to act on our own. We have enough potential to rise to the challenge. But what we need is more political unity and determination. There is no single objective reason why Europe should have any complexes about anyone else. Being a European is a reason to be proud. We have a right and an obligation to hold our heads up high, both when with our enemies and when with our friends. And this is what, in some sense, our summit will be about.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

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# Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos on managing migration and on upgrading the EU Visa Information System

Dear all,

The migration situation in the EU and its neighbourhood has continued to be relatively stable, but recent developments call for vigilance and continuous efforts and coordination from everyone. While there has been a steady decrease on the Central Mediterranean route, we have seen some increases at the Greek-Turkish Land border but also increased movements along the coastal route in the Western Balkans and some peaks in arrivals in the Western Mediterranean.

The European Union has continued its work on all fronts:

- protect Europe's external borders;
- strengthen cooperation with international partners;
- provide international protection to refugees;
- and save lives on dangerous migration routes.

Today's situation shows that:

- 1) our continuous efforts are making a difference;
- 2) but that our job is not done and that we need to strengthen certain efforts;
- 3) and also that we need to work towards structural and long-term solutions.

When it comes to border protection, I'm glad to say that more than 1,300 experts are deployed on the ground, helping national border guards. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency has also supported a growing number of return operations. However, Member States still need to take better advantage of the Agency's new and expanded mandate on return. Member States also need to take steps to ensure that more return decisions are really implemented.

I also call on Member States to urgently fill the pledging gaps for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's operational activities at the EU external borders. This will also be important, for example, to provide the support needed at the Greek-Turkish border, where the European Border and Coast Guard is ready to help even more, if needed.

Today, we also propose to revise and strengthen our Visa Information System, which will equally contribute to:

- stronger external borders;
- more security;
- and fluid travel.

We propose to have automated checks through which visa authorities and border guards will be able to search all relevant databases with a single search, and obtain the information they need to do their job and prevent entry for those who pose a threat. We want to upgrade the Visa Information System to allow Member States to also exchange information on holders of long-stay visas and residence permits, and to introduce security checks on these persons.

Border guards will be able to quickly determine whether a long-stay visa or residence permit is valid, whether the person presenting the document is indeed its rightful holder, and whether the person poses a threat to the internal security of the Member States. This will make border checks easier, faster and more secure, while strengthening the security of the Schengen area.

I am also glad that the European Union has continued to uphold its values and offer protection to those in need, both here in Europe as well as along the migration routes. Under our latest resettlement scheme, 20 Member States have pledged more than 50,000 resettlement places, making it the largest collective commitment of the EU and its Member States on resettlement to date. I call on Member States to deliver at least half of those pledges by October this year, and those that haven't committed yet to urgently do so.

I'm also pleased to announce that so far 1,152 people have been evacuated from Libya to Niger through the Emergency Transit Mechanism for further resettlement to Europe. Referrals by the UNHCR should now be accelerated, so that pledges can be materialised and that persons evacuated from Libya can be resettled as soon as possible by the receiving Member States. In this context, our ongoing cooperation with several third countries has been paramount and must continue.

We have recently reached agreements with several partner countries on arrangements for return and readmission. The EU-Turkey Statement also continues to play an important role in reducing irregular and dangerous crossings. The mobilisation of the second tranche of EUR 3 billion is now under way and should be implemented swiftly.

In support of ongoing efforts to engage with partner countries and manage migration more effectively, we are today also proposing to revise the legislation on Immigration Liaison Officers and to create a genuine a European network of Immigration Liaison Officers. These officers have unique operational expertise and first-hand knowledge that is hugely important in:

- preventing and combatting irregular migration,
- facilitating the return of irregular migrants

– and managing legal migration.

The new network will strengthen coordination and enhance support for their work abroad.

Dear all, the progress that we have made so far on all fronts underlines the importance of our comprehensive and joint approach – and the need to continue it. Together we are building a stable and long-term answer to the challenges of migration today and in the future. The reform of our Common European Asylum System is an essential part of this approach, and I hope that European leaders recognise this importance and will be able to find an agreement in June.

Thank you.